Travancore was making rapid strides towards progress. The only obstacle in its progress was the communal differences. Communal differences were fostered by communal laws. Until these differences disappeared Travancore could not hope to become a solid nation. There were in the State many who were prepared to abandon their communal laws and rules. But the fear that their life would become difficult if they forsook these laws deterred them from leading an independent life. Unless a person was a member of any particular community, his civil rights could not be defined." The member's request was that there should be a law defining and protecting the civil rights of persons who did not want to be members of any particular community but who wanted to live independent of any community. The ideal of every Government should be to help people in unifying themselves, at any rate not to check any tendencies in that direction. By enacting a law of the kind desired by the member, the Government would not be creating a new community but on the other hand would be doing away with several personal and communal laws. Such laws were few in British India. Even in Travancore, they were few in olden days. It was only recently that they increased in number. Agitations for temple entry, *satyagraha*, etc., had their origin in communal differences. There were many who were suffering on account of their communal laws. It was the duty of the Government to help these people by enacting a law protecting their civil rights.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mrs. Palpu, I do not know how many people there are who are concerned with this. This, again, seems to be a matter in which Government should not take the initiative.

22. Promotion of the cultivation of cocoanut and areca palms.

MR. MATTHAI MUTALALI (*Kunnattur taluk*) said that cocoanut cultivation played an important part in the economic life of the people of Travancore. The people in Travancore were small landholders deriving their income from their fields and cocoanut gardens. The fall in the price of cocoanuts and the fall in yield per cocoanut tree placed the poor landholder in a pitiable plight. The chief reason for the poor yield was the cocoanut pest which was devastating the cocoanut trees from one end of the State to the other. This has been admitted by the Agricultural Department and the Government. But it was regrettable that nothing substantial was done by the Department to eradicate the pest. The Mycologist was not able to find out ways for eradicating this evil and the average ryot was not in any way benefited by the Department of Agriculture in regard to the scientific cultivation of his gardens. It is stated that the area under cocoanut had increased from 499,666 acres in 1100 to 550,000 acres in 1106 but nowhere is it stated how much the yield has increased. Probably, the figurers would not have been very encouraging. The fall in the yield might, to a certain extent, be due to the fault of the cultivator himself. But the Agricultural Department was not immune from all responsibility. If the Department was not able to do anything substantial and tangible in the matter, the Government should lose no time in securing expert opinion

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from elsewhere. Any amount spent on this account would not be in vain. Years ago when silk industry was on its wane in France on account of a pest, the French Government approached Dr. Pasteur who after much research and labour was able to diagnose the disease and find out a remedy and thereby saved a national industry from ruin. Similar action should be taken by this Government also to find out ways and means for eradicating the plant pest and save the majority of the people of Travancore from misery and hopelessness.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Matthai Mutalali, I trust that the Department does not deserve the attack you have made. And, I am afraid, you have not made any new suggestion. The Department has done all it could do to introduce improved methods of cultivation; and it is always ready to advise people who come and ask for advice. But there is this difficulty; people ask for advice and do not act according to it. Recently, the Mycologist had been to Ceylon to study the work done there to combat the diseases of the cocoanut palm. He has come back, and the report about the result of his studies there will soon be published. The Department will, in future, I hope, continue to help the country, but can do so only if the people, who come for advice, will take the advice.

23. Development of agriculture in the Shencotta taluk.

MR. S. K. SUBRAHMANYA AIYAR (*Shencotta taluk*) said that geographically Shencotta occupied a peculiar position when compared with the rest of Travancore. Like the rest of the State, Shencotta was an agricultural tract but because of its peculiar position it called for an entirely different treatment at the hands of the Government. Shencotta had a large number of irrigation tanks having but a small storage capacity. As a result of several representations, these tanks were improved to a certain extent and their control was vested in the Maramat and the Revenue Departments. But there were still some defects, for remedying which, certain suggestions were made at the 23rd session of the Assembly, such as the holding of agricultural conferences, formation of an irrigation board, etc. Action was promised on these suggestions and it should be taken promptly.

The distinction between major and minor irrigation works should be done away with. The water flowing through a major *kal* was treated differently when it entered a minor *kal*. The owner of a land irrigated by a major *kal* was immune from any payment for the cost of the work while the owner of a land irrigated by the minor *kal* was asked to contribute a share torwards the cost of the work. This distinction was unjustifiable and should cease to exist.

With the fall in the price of paddy to half its normal price and with uncertain and unseasonal rains, the ryots in Shencotta were facing a menacing danger. To conserve water by enlarging the storage capacity of the irrigation tanks was the only practical way of helping the ryots from failure of crops or unsuccessful cultivation. The Tank Restoration Scheme had not alleviated the distress of the ryots to any

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